THE SHIELD G-MAN CLUB FANZINE

VOLUME 1
January 2020

The MIGHTY CRUSADERS

THE SHIELD G-MAN CLUB FANZINE

Volume 1, Number 1 January 2020

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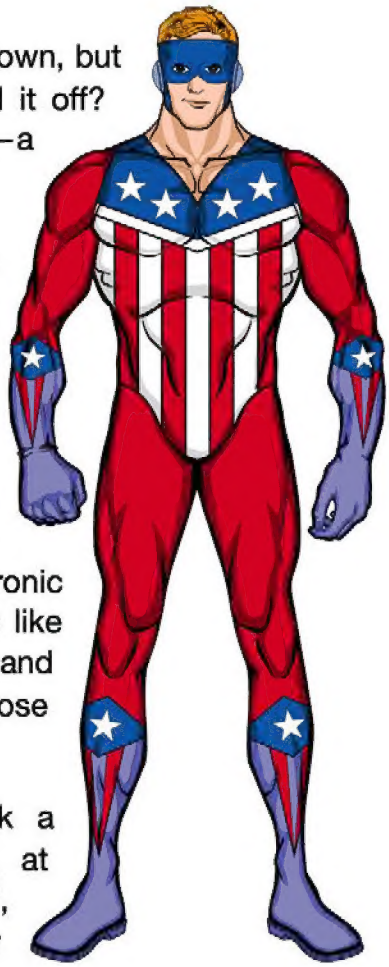
CODY

Creating Ultraheroes with HeroMachine

by Jim Burrows

Have you ever wanted to design an ultrahero[1] of your own, but weren't sure that you had the artistic skills to pull it off? Well, as they say, "There's an app for that!"—a Web app called HeroMachine.



Three of the characters in our recent comic, "Who's Who: The Handbook of the G-Man Universe, Volume 1", were created using HeroMachine, as were the images of the Comet and the Shield shown here. HeroMachine is an app specifically designed to create character portraits for Fantasy and Superhero Role Playing Games using a system that I tend to think of as 'electronic paper dolls'. It provides a gallery of pieces/parts like heads, eyes, mouths, hands, clothing, insignia and weapons. It lets you position, scale and mask those pieces to create your characters.

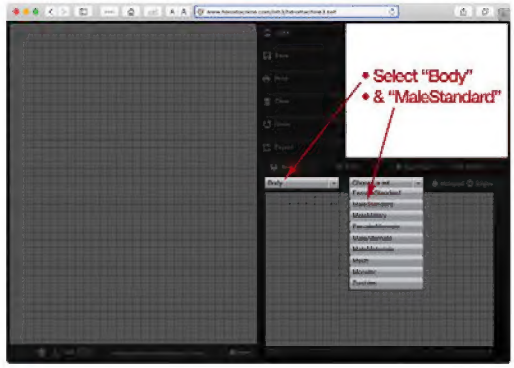
There have been several versions going back a couple of decades. They can all be found at HeroMachine.com. The latest version, "HM3", is the one featured in this article, but the older and specialty versions are pretty spiffy as well.

Here, to the right, is what it looks like when you first enter it by clicking on the "HM3" link at the top of the HeroMachine.com home page. A pop-up dialog appears, offering you several choices. Since our goal is creating our own ultra character, the options that we're most interested in are these two:

- **CONTINUE**—to come back to a saved character.
- **ADVANCED**—to start creating our character.

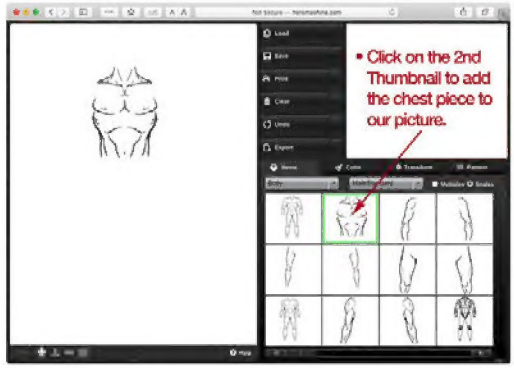
You may also want to explore the **TEMPLATE**s and **STANDARD LOAD**s to get a feel for how HeroMachine 3 works.

One of the easiest MLJ characters to create is Red Rube. His costume consists simply of a cape, tights, belt and boots. Let's do it. This won't be a full tutorial, just some quick directions to get you started.

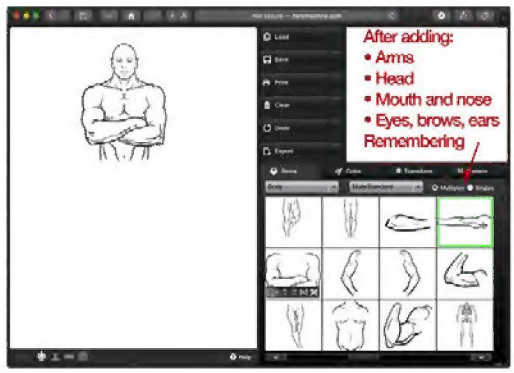


His chest is bare, so let's start by selecting the "Body" item from the "Choose Slot..." list control of the **ADVANCED** option in the pop-up, followed by the "MaleStandard" item from the "Choose a set..." list to the right of it.

Once you've selected those two items, the bottom right panel will show a set of twelve thumbnails. Clicking on the second one will place the item in the main panel to the left, and we're on our way. Let's pick up the pace a little.

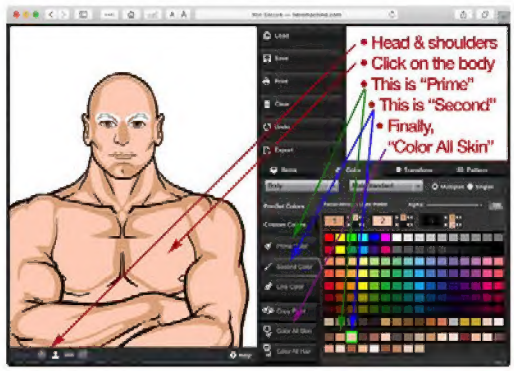


By clicking twice on the right arrow on the scroll bar in the lower right corner we can get to the third set of thumbnails, where we will find a pair of folded arms. First we change the selector to the middle right from Singles to Multiples. Then, clicking on the thumbnail adds the arms as a layer in front of the chest.

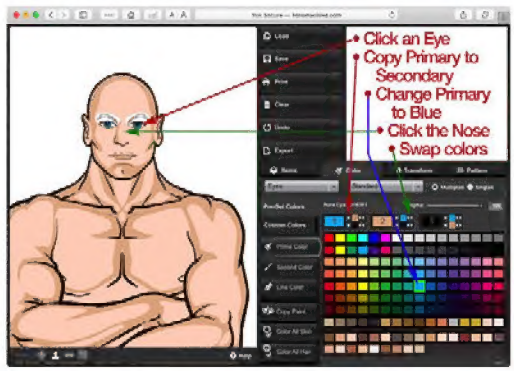


Changing the selection in the first list control from "Body" to "Head" and selecting "MaleStandard" in the second list gets us to a set of head thumbnails. Clicking on the second one will add the head to our image. Add a mouth, a nose, two eyes (remembering to switch to "multiples"), two eyebrows and two ears and we're ready to start some coloring.

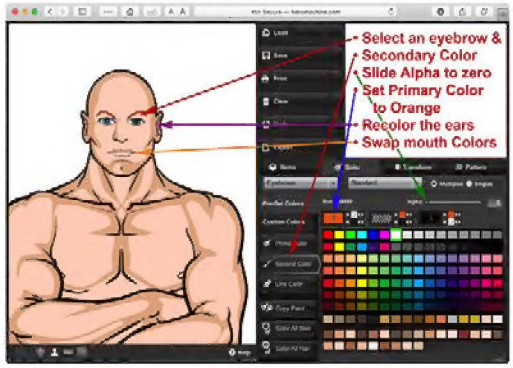
First, we switch from full figure to headshot in the lower left. Then click somewhere on the body. Next switch from the "Items" tab to "Color" and the thumbnails are replaced with color swatches. With "Prime Color" selected in the menu to the left of the swatches, we pick a color swatch for shading. Then with "Secondary Color" selected, we pick a lighter skin tone. Finally, we click on "Color All Skin" in the menu to the left of the swatches. Whew! After all that we have almost the coloring we want.



The shading on the nose is the reverse of what we want, so we click on the nose in the image and swap the Primary and Secondary colors by clicking on either the 1's 2 button or the 2's 1. The eyes need recoloring, so we click on one of them, and use the 1's 2 button to copy the dark shade to the Secondary color. Next, we change the Primary color to Blue. Once that eye is right, we can use "Copy Paint" to copy its colors to the other.



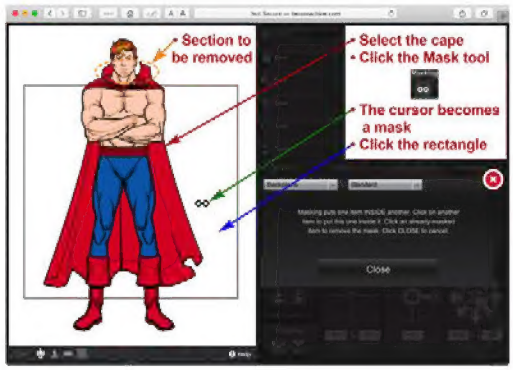
The eyebrows are also funny, so we click on one of them. With Secondary Color selected in the menu, we slide the "Alpha" slider all the way to the left, which makes the Secondary color transparent. Then we change the Primary color to a nice Red or maybe a bright Orange. After that, let's swap the colors on the mouth. Then move the dark shade to the Primary on the ears and make the Secondary even darker.



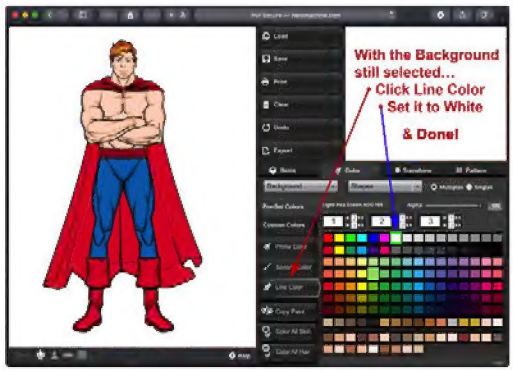
That pretty much gives us all the skills we need to add the Hair, Legwear as MaleSpandex, the Belt, the boots as FootRight and FootLeft and the cape both as Shoulders and Backplane. The only skills we're missing for the full image are those for reshaping the Backplane cape to suit the figure we've created. Here's what we have so far. Since we just added the cape, it is in front of the rest of the parts. It's also a bit too large and extends above his shoulders. The skills we need actually apply to getting the belt and shoulders just right, too—but let's look at the cape.

First, we send the cape back to become the very bottom layer in our image, using the lower right tool in the Layers panel of the "Transformation" tab. Next, we scale it to be 90% by 90% in the size tool, either by dragging the target in the little XY graph, or typing 90 in the two text boxes in the tool. Then we reposition it, by dragging it with the mouse, or moving it 20 to the right and 10 up in the compass rose, or typing 199 and 124 in the text boxes. Finally, we add a Background using the first thumbnail from the Shape set, send it to the back and give it a height of 66%.

The way we will cut the extra part of the cape off is one of the most powerful features of HM3: Masking. This is a simple example to get us started. Notice that the part of the cape we want is within the rectangle of the background shape. We click on the cape to select it, go to the Transform tab and click on the Masking tool (circled in purple in the previous picture). A dialog box pops up explaining masking, and the mouse cursor takes the shape of a mask. Using it, we click on the rectangle and voila! The part that extends beyond it is cut off.



The last step is to turn the Line Color of the rectangle white so that it disappears.



So, there we have a really short two-page tutorial that results in creating a Mighty Crusader, or at least an MLJ hero. Okay, there are one or two more things...

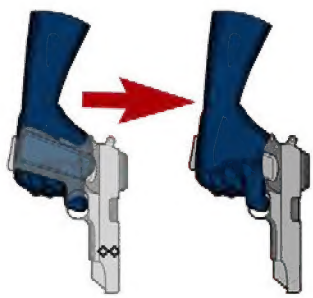
One of the most important parts of the process is to **Save** your character either as a Flash cookie or as text. Flash cookies are lost when you tell your browser to clear its stored data, so you may want to use the Text tab in the Save window, select all of the displayed XML, Copy it and Paste it into an off-line text document. (I save mine as separate notes in the MacOS Notes app.) Whichever way you save it, you can reload it at a later time and make further changes.

Another thing you'll want to do is export the character that you created as an image file. The **Export** menu item will allow you to do that in a number of resolutions and formats: the full figure or just the headshot, in portrait or landscape layouts, as either a PNG or JPEG file. Exactly how the file is saved varies depending upon your browser and operating system.

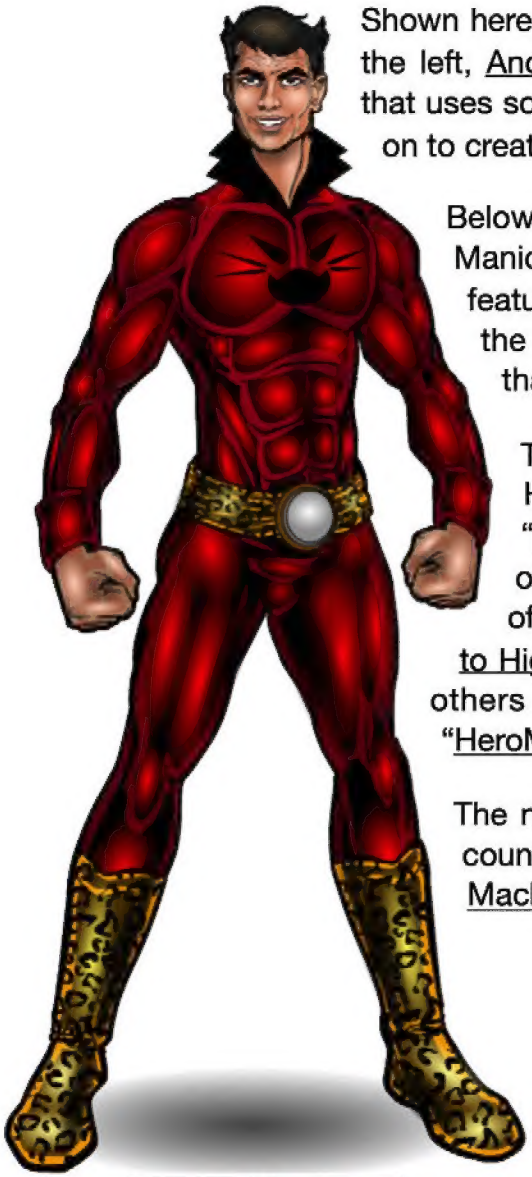
And, of course, Rube is pretty much the simplest MLJ character to create in HeroMachine. Most of the others have costume pieces that don't quite match the stock elements in HM3. That's where the Transform tab really comes into its own, allowing you to distort, turn and cut up the available pieces into the shapes needed.

Take, for instance, Victoria Adams, retroactively the *original* original Shield that the merely original Shield, Joe Higgins, was inspired by—or was it his father who was the original Shield? Time travel and reboots are a... source of confusion. Anyway, there's a lot of masking going on in the image of her, to create her various insignia, the design of her top, and the details of her belt, for instance.

One interesting feature that this image shows off is that masking many of the hand elements to a weapon or other object causes that object to appear to be held in the hand. Very useful. All you have to do is layer the gun in front of the hand, select the gun, using the masking tool and click on the hand. Voila!



Beyond the simple functions of HeroMachine, there are a couple of techniques that are worth mentioning: shading (along with its complement: highlighting) and posing. It's really beyond the scope of this article to do tutorials on these topics, so I will just give you a taste of what can be done.



Shown here are two versions of the Jaguar exhibiting these techniques. To the left, Andrew M. Smith has used shading and highlighting on a figure that uses some of the body and clothing elements that aren't quite straight on to create a more dynamic pose and painterly view of the character.

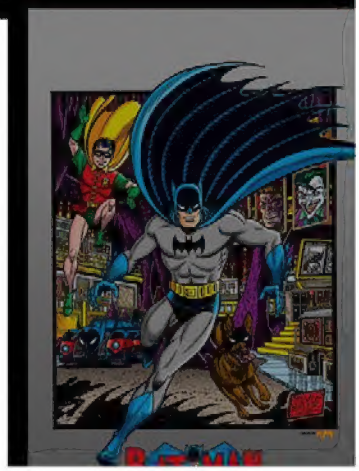
Below is an image that I did trying to capture the pose that Reno Maniquis used to create his homage cover "A Couple Of Crusaders", featuring Jaguar with Darkling and Druid. I couldn't quite capture all the dynamism of the hand-drawn piece, but I had fun trying. (And that's the point, isn't it?)

There are a number of good resources for learning about HeroMachine 3 and the techniques shown here. There's the "How to mask" link in the Masking tool. It leads straight to one of the many pages of the HeroMachine.com site. That site is full of useful and interesting stuff. Andrew has a brief tutorial, "How to Highlight and Shade", on the HeroMachine forums, and there are others on YouTube and elsewhere. Additionally, there is the "HeroMachine Creations" group on Facebook.

The next page shows all of the MLJ characters I've generated, not counting variants (such as the Wizard in tights). See also the "Hero Machine" pages on MightyCrusaders.net.

[1] Forgive me the small conceit of using "ultraheroes" in place of "superheroes". It dates back to when Marvel and DC jointly trademarked "superhero" as a swipe at the smaller publishers.

AWESOME



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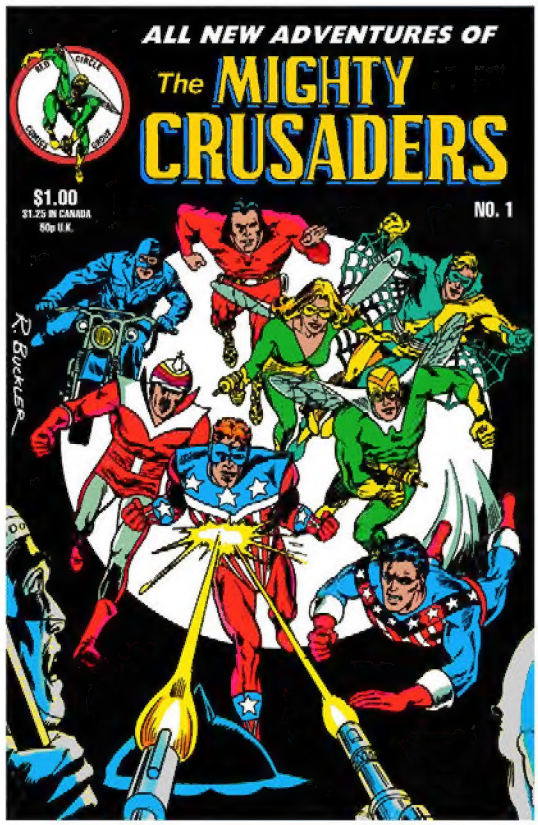
THE COMING OF THE CRUSADERS! (OR AT LEAST THEIR LINE-UPS)

by Kevin Moorhead

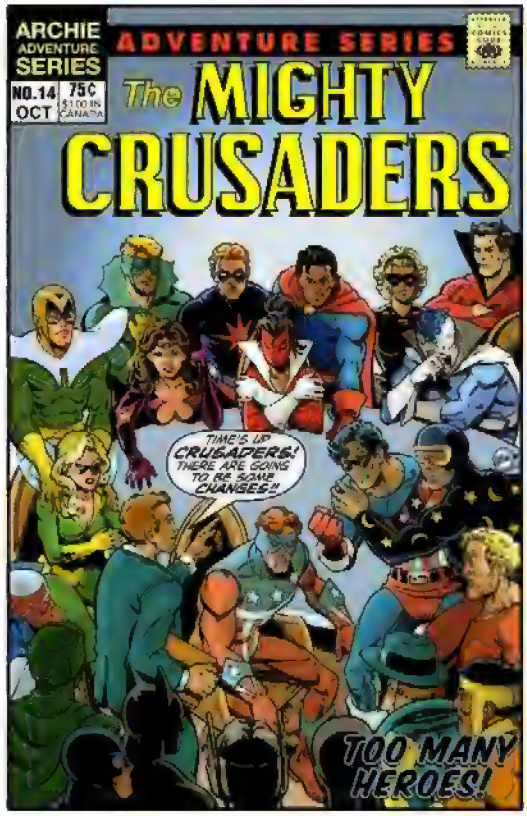
And there came a day. Unlike any other! (Wait, wrong company, lemme try again.)

I can almost still remember the first time I went to our local comic shop, Fat Cats, and saw the Avengers right there on the shelf with Justice League. That I was used to. But this trip was different. Different because there was also another group title right there on the shelf with them. One that I'd never heard of before: the Mighty Crusaders. I still say that Rich Buckler's 80s revival book was a thing of beauty. To this day, I think it contained some of this best work. His pairing with Giacoia and Tony deZuniga as inkers gave the book the perfect Bronze Age look. It absolutely left me with some indelible memories. In fact, Rich's cover to #1 remains for me *the* definitive line-up for the group. The original Golden Age Shield, the Black Hood, the Comet, the Web, Fly, Fly-Girl, Jaguar and the Lancelot Strong Shield. The Mighty Crusaders! I loved the three issues that came out! Loved them!



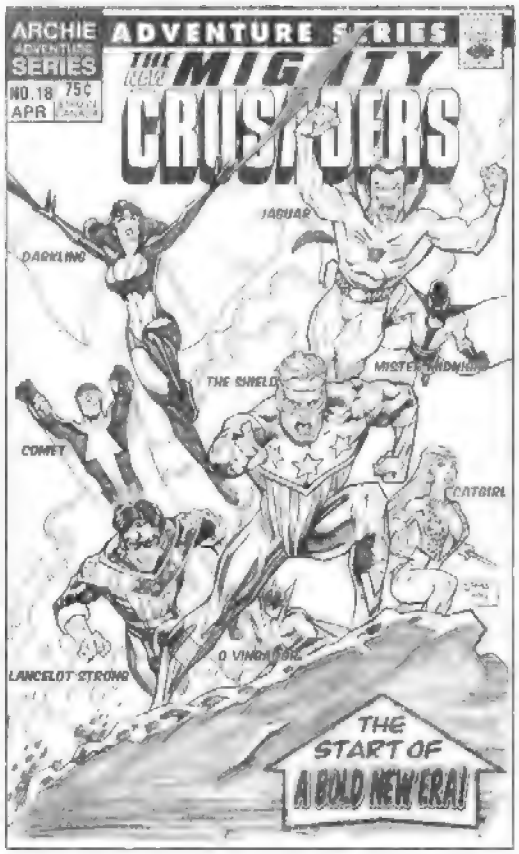
Only years later did I find out that more issues actually came out and even more years after that, that I was able to pick them up. It was great to see that the series had continued but I found that how it ended, and the state of the team at that point, really bothered me. To see how they chose to write out Buckler's new characters Darkling and Doc Reeves, it bothered me a lot, in fact. To this day, I cannot read their

last issue without seeing Darkling being figuratively raped and dumped into a river by the Brain Emperor. Then how Doc Reeves, the only Black character, died from what amounted to random gun violence. Topping it off with the team deciding to burn his body to ashes on the spot before moving on. If there was a need, or even simply a desire, to remove the pair from use then have them just leave the team. Or retire. But the way those scenes played out has bothered me ever since.

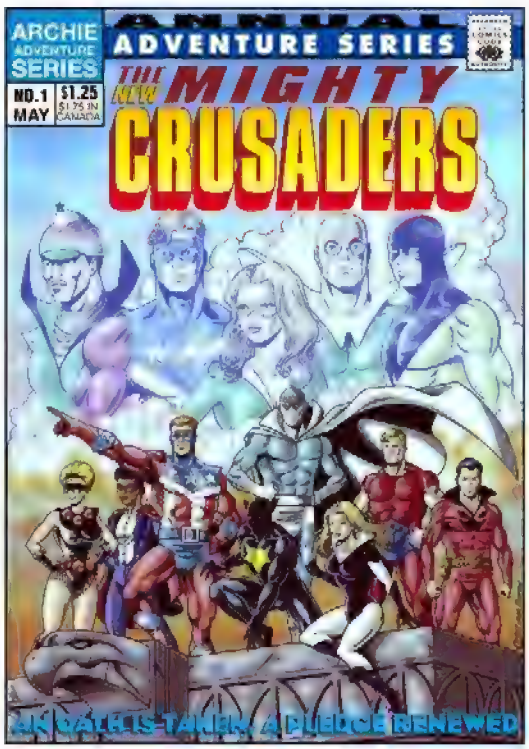


Flash forward a few years. I was lucky enough at this point to have a job that allowed me some extra cash. With my interest in comic art commissions, it took me a bit but I knew what I wanted to do—to "fix" what had been done to the Crusaders. To bring back Darkling and Reeves. I contacted some artists I knew to see if they would be interested in doing a series of 4 imaginary covers. In the end, I went with the magnificent Mitch Ballard as well as creative Chris Ivy, who were both kind enough to agreed to handle the art and lettering. I worked up basic plots that would bring the Buckler team back together and give them a proper send-off.

So even though the first issue cover was an homage of Avengers #181 with its Too Many Heroes blurb and an all hands on deck feel, I settled on the idea of an eight member team going forward. I wish I could say that I had some great grand plan of who I chose and why but, honestly, it really came down to who I thought would look good on the covers. Well, a little more thought than that went into it. I knew that having more women on the team was important and so that led me to include the newly returned to life Darkling as well as Fly-Girl and She-Fox in the lineup. I feel there should always be a Shield on the team and rather than forcing myself to choose, I went with including them both. Steel Sterling had been around since the Golden Age but never been a member and so finally putting him on the team felt like a nice touch. In a way, it was the same with She-Fox. She didn't have a lot of screen time during the 80s run, only a couple of back-up stories, so giving her membership seemed like a nice bit of promotion for her. Fly-Girl without the Fly would have been odd for the time but my desire for more representation in the team outweighed that, so the Fly didn't make the cut. Jaguar just had, and still does, have a great look for a cover. Classic early 60s costume design. I admit it wasn't the most well thought-out the lineup. My excuse is that this was the first attempt to "plot" out something like this. A (hopefully) noble first attempt that worked for these 4 covers.



After a short break and some positive feedback from fans who found the covers online, came the decision to continue with the covers. I knew I needed to put a little more thought into who should be in the team going forward. I knew I wanted more women on the team as well as some minority members. It was also important to me to give the series a proper sense of being set into the wider world. So the first character I chose was an easy one. Because of my stated dislike for how she was written out, the continued use Darkling made me feel good. To keep the original Shield on was a no-brainer. I do believe there must always be a Shield on the team. The continued inclusion of the Lancelot Strong Shield gave me some Kirby, and I love me some Kirby. The Comet was another Buckler team member I went with. (I meant what I said about how important that #1 cover was.) But to give him a little twist, I chose a version of his costume that never appeared in the actual comics. In the later 80s, a promo piece had been done for a potential relaunch that gave the Comet a new look. I swiped that. O Vingador had started off as just a reworked and recolored Hangman for the South American Brazilian market. I decided to make him a completely separate character and brought him onto the team as their first Latino member. Captain Midnight came in via his teaser appearance in the back of Mighty Crusaders #2. I felt his inclusion on the team gave them a sense of the cosmic. Using the barbarian warrior woman version of CatGirl from the unpublished Blue Ribbon Comics #15 gave me a couple of things. Another woman on the team for one, and also she was a cool obscure character. I enjoy it when writers will use that "out of left field" type character to round out a team. It felt like a nice balance overall. The original Shield as that steady character. CatGirl as the brash fighter. O Vingador as a new hero learning the ropes. I think they worked well for the 13 issues they appeared in. I do feel bad that Doc Reeves never made an appearance in these. I pulled him from the team meaning to use him in another imaginary cover series but that didn't pan out. After being so upset that he was killed the way he was, to bring him back and then sideline him annoys me. I should've done that better.



When I realized that the time seemed to have come for a shift in the line-up, it made sense to do it in the Crusaders' first annual. I'd always loved Chuck Patton's cover for Justice League #2. The original League looking over the new League is classic. And even though the Buckler cover is the team for me, I felt it was time for a bigger change to the team. More new faces even though it meant leaving many classic ones aside. Out were the Shields, Fly and Fly-Girl, the Black Hood and the Comet. None of the 1960s team would be in this new

THE SHIELD G-MAN CLUB

Truth, justice, patriotism, and courage were represented by the four stars on the Shield's extraordinary uniform. His true identity, Joe Higgins, was only known by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover.

MLJ Magazines launched the Shield G-Man Club in Pep Comics #15. It offered a red, white and blue badge and membership card in exchange for a 2¢ stamp.

The Shield G-Man Club ran from 1941–1948 and had a few different premiums.

The most iconic is the pinback button.

There was also a membership card. However, when the Shield G-Man Club became the Archie Club in 1948, members were encouraged to turn in their G-Man membership card to get a free Archie Club membership card.

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JOE HIGGINS (The Shield)

And be sure you keep tuned to this page in every issue of PEP COMICS, because from now on this is the "Shield G-Man Club" page. That means it is your page. Here, I will discuss the purpose of the SHIELD G-MAN CLUB and whatever we are going to do depends on exactly what you want me to do. So, as soon as you get your identification card, if you have any ideas for organizing groups in your own town, or if you have ever had any experience working with the law, send me a line and let me know. Your letter will be discussed right on this page.

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AGE _____

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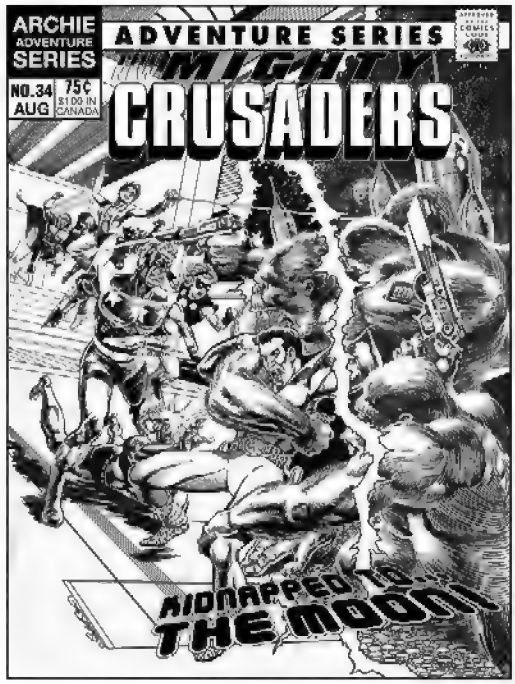
line up. With the Golden Age Shield having had the stuff kicked out of him in a previous story, it made sense to call his son into action. And to give him a distinctive look from his father, he got the trunks version of the Shield costume. Since the Fox had been around long before the Crusaders, and yet he had never been a member, it felt like a good time for him to join. Pow-Girl, the wife of the Web, had been bouncing around in various cameos in the 60s books. A fun look and a great name. (I thought about reformatting her name as POW!-Girl but ended up deciding against it.) Plus her inclusion got another woman on the team. Nebula came in from the Agents of Atlantis, a group whose one and only appearance was in Blue Ribbon Comics #9. She might have had more screen time on these covers than in her one comic appearance. The big addition, to me, came with a new version of the Golden Age hero the Wizard. While some characters can have a reason to stay young (the Fly's magic or the scifi element to the Shield) I couldn't see a reason for the Blain Whitney Wizard to still be young. So I came up with the idea of a generational hero. Or specifically heroine. His granddaughter, an African-American woman, would join the team as a true Wizard. I'm a sucker for the Jaguar's classic 60s look with his jet belt and leopard print boots. I love it when he's around. I wish I could say there was more thought that went into his inclusion but it really did stop with "cool". And as the team had never had that all-powerful magician Doctor-Fate-type character, Mister Justice was a nice final piece. A magical character to play off the earlier and more cosmic Mister Midnight.



Going forward? Should the imaginary covers ever resume (I have many in various states of readiness) there are so many more characters that could join. Other members of the Agents of Atlantis? Could T.R.I.U.M.P.H. assign someone to the team? The Fly and Fly-Girl have been gone long enough now that their return is certainly called for. Something big would need to happen line-up wise for the upcoming 25th issue cover. Like the Wizard, there are a number of Golden Age heroes who definitely have modern-day descendants that could join. So many other heroes and heroines and so many more villains from the Silver as well as the Golden Age who can return to cause our heroes troubles. But, for now, Excelsi... nope, wrong again. Until next time, everyone!

Join Today!

THE SHIELD G-MAN CLUB

https://www.facebook.com/groups/shieldgmanclub

PUBLIC DOMAIN AND THE COMICS

by Lance Jones

OF COURSE, WE START WITH THE ORIGIN STORY....

...because you have to have an origin story! There are no radioactive spiders or Tibetan monks in this one, but it does result in unintended powers!

I tell people that I am an "accidental reprinter." I never envisioned that I would be doing this years later, or that I would be at it 60 hours a week, let alone making a living at it and using it as my retirement plan. One day I was surfing the Web—I don't even remember why—and I happened across a Webpage that included a Steve Ditko comic story and the notation that it was public domain. I had previously published a dozen books under a pen name and a few reprints of public domain (non-comic) books; so, I thought: I should publish this, then I'll have 13 books out instead of 12! That was my only goal at the time. I downloaded the pages, laid out a book, submitted it to the precursor of Amazon KDP, and that was that.

Then someone ordered a copy. I checked to see if other public domain comics were available, and found that there were tens of thousands. Some were being reprinted here and there, but nothing large scale, and very few collections. I did another book, someone bought a copy; I did another book, and not long after, someone bought a copy. My obsession had begun. Now, three years later, with about 2,500 collections published and a request list that is over 500 books waiting to be created, I will be laying out and publishing comic reprints for at least six months after I die.

WHAT IS PUBLIC DOMAIN... REALLY?

The purpose of copyright is to allow the creator of an original work to enjoy exclusive benefits to that work for a period of time. As with a patent, eventually the creator will lose those exclusive rights, because without those rights being turned over to the world, societal growth will be slowed. The concentration of creativity, control, power in any one place for too long is disruptive to progress, so copyright was designed to be temporary. In recent decades, that exclusivity has been greatly expanded. Today, if you create something, you have copyright for your entire life (and then some), but for most of the 20th Century, copyright was an initial term of 28 years, with a renewal in the 28th year that would give the copyright holder an additional 47 years (later expanded to 67 years)—at most, 95 years.

PUBLIC DOMAIN occurs when a copyright is either invalid or when it expires because the renewal was not registered or the entire term has lapsed. In most cases, comics are public domain because their renewal never took place in the 28th year. That's the key—a renewal could be done early or late, but had to be done in the 28th year; if you published a book in 1949, you had to renew it in 1977, or you lost that copyright. All publications between 1924 and 1963 had to be renewed, but many comic companies were out of business and there was no one around to renew them. Fiction House had a large line of amazing comics and characters, but since they were out of business in 1955, when the renewals of Golden Age material were due in the late 1960s, there was no one in the office to do it. In other cases, renewals were not registered by companies because they just forgot, or because they didn't consider comics to be worth the time and effort. THE SHIELD not only belonged to a still-functioning comic company, Archie Comics (previously M.L.J. Publications), but Archie had even published some new stories featuring THE SHIELD in the 1960s. Still, when those renewals for the 1940s comics were due... oops, someone neglected to do it! Often we don't know why, but it would surprise many people to learn that over 85% of publications originally copyrighted before 1964 are public domain!

The most exciting news is that public domain does not mean that no one owns it; it means that **everyone** owns it. You own it, I own it, the little old lady down the street owns it. Take, for example, the SHIELD stories in PEP COMICS; you own those stories. You can do whatever you want with them. You can reprint the stories, you can make Christmas cards out of them, make calendars, posters for your walls, sell them as campaign buttons, or tattoo them on your butt. They are yours. No one has exclusivity to them, and just because someone uses it doesn't mean you can't use it too.

I have had more than a few people ask me, "Do you think you have the right to make money off the work of others?" I always answer the same way—"Yes, the same way you do and everyone else in the country does. We all own it!" And when you think about it, that's what public domain is for—to ensure that the creative works don't die out, forgotten, lost to the mists of time.

HOW DO I KNOW IF SOMETHING IS PUBLIC DOMAIN?

Before the Internet was invented by Al Gore or Obi-Wan Kenobi, knowing what was public domain was extremely difficult. You had to visit the Library of Congress and check their database, or you had to pay them to do a copyright search for you. This was time-consuming and expensive. Today you can check with 99%+ accuracy using online sources. The University of Pennsylvania Libraries have the best information:

https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/cce/

For all books published and copyrighted from 1950 forward, you can check renewals using the Library of Congress online database, which is close to 100% accurate. For books that were published before 1950, you have more work to do—checking the Periodicals lists and the Contributions to Periodicals lists for each year that would apply. For example, if you are checking on a book that was published in 1947, you would have to check not only the three separate lists for 1975 (the official renewal year) but also 1974 and 1976 in case they were recorded a little bit late or placed in an earlier list, just to be safe; a minimum of nine lists. It can be a lot of work in some cases, and the pre-1950 lists may contain typographical errors that can frustrate your search, which is why I cannot say that it is 100% accurate. But don't give up, and if you have any questions, Gwandanaland Comics will help!

This is just the tip of the copyright-information iceberg, of course. Copyright and public domain are not complex, once you know the laws that apply to the year of the publications you're checking; but it can be time-consuming. We have made errors and had to correct them. Like anything else, you learn as you go, and you never know it all, but the wealth of comic material in the public domain runs over two million pages, easily, so knowledge really is power!

If you want to do some comic reprint projects, and we can offer any help, just holler. I don't consider anyone competition, because I will never be able to complete all the material I want to do—there is more than enough to go around, and what you offer will be different from what I offer, even if it is based on the same material.

GWANDANALAND COMICS

Gwandanaland Comics came into being accidentally, but the name was very purposeful. I wanted a name that, when plugged into the Amazon search bar, only my books would come up—so I had to invent a name. "Gwandanaland" is a bastardization of the ancient landmass of prehistory called Gondwanaland. By making it different, I created a trademark that has served me well; probably the best business decision I ever made.

On a given day, I will create 1–2 new collections and update 1–2 books previously published. We're always looking to replace low-quality pages, find stories or issues we were missing, and just make the books look better. Thankfully, the available pages for THE SHIELD are above average, so they already make very beautiful books, but even those may be upgraded as new material is found. We use online sources for files (Comic Book Plus and Digital Comic Museum are two big sources), but we also get scans from readers, and loyal readers send me books to scan.

Gwandanaland is not just a publisher and bookseller; we are a living, breathing, growing and maturing embodiment of public domain comics history. Consider how few Golden Age comics were available to read before 10–12 years ago; thousands of books were only available online.

Now, with the advent of print-on-demand (POD) publishing, books can be created with no initial investment, no overhead. Before POD, a publisher had to believe he could sell hundreds or thousands of copies in order to create a book and pay for a print run; now there is no print run! A book is printed when it is ordered, so even the book that only sells a couple of copies can see the light of day. Gwandanaland Comics is a business, and I want to make money, but almost as important is to ensure that the history of comics is not limited to a handful of reference works — the stories can still be out there, and you can hold them in your hands for less than $50,000!

Many readers ask how I decide what books to make next, since there are so many available. In the beginning, it was just a matter of guessing what I thought people might like. Sometimes I was right, but sometimes I was very wrong because there is a large number of Gwandanaland Books that still have failed to sell a single copy! That's one of the reasons I must work hard to put out so many books; although there are some exceptions, the average title only sells a couple of copies each year—we're an avid group, but relatively small, and the books are not cheap to buy. For the last year or so, however, choosing a book is easy because as Gwandanalanders began requesting collections, characters, concepts, I just started making what readers wanted. I have a list (over 500 long and growing!), and if more than one person requests a book, it moves up the list. If three people ask for it, it moves to the top. My choices are much easier because you tell me what to do.

We don't digitally remaster the books, and only in the most necessary cases do we make any alterations to a page. We're trying to present these books as close to the original as possible. The modern remastered books are certainly attractive, and present flawless white pages with bright colors, but if we went down that road the books would lose their authenticity, and the prices would skyrocket. Our books are imperfect but authentic.

All our books are available on Amazon—they are our producer and sales outlet, and while I wish we were not part of that evil empire, without them this would not exist. Just plug "Gwandanaland" and any other keyword you want into the search bar, and the books will show up. We have a spreadsheet catalog/list, which we update monthly, and it can guide you to what you want; just send us a message on Facebook or an email to gwandanaland@yahoo.com. We have an official Facebook page (Gwandanaland Comics, of course) and there is a fan-operated page, FOG Fans Of Gwandanaland, where readers share their experiences and opinions.

Most importantly, if you have any questions about our books, or if you want us to make a special book for you, write, message, email, use smoke signals, or yell out the window. We want to make it for you! If it is legal and possible, we'll do it. Indulge your fantasies! Are there specific SHIELD stories you'd like to see in a book, or a special character, series, artist, writer, topic, anything you want? That's why we exist!

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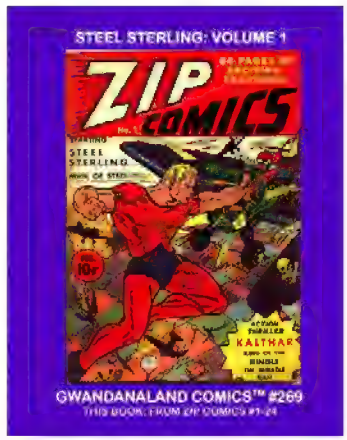


This is a brief summary of copyright rules and how they apply to public domain. If a book was first published in another country, the laws of that country will apply. Everything is based on the time and place of first publication, so this is based on books that had a US-first publication.

1923 and Before — It is public domain because all renewals have expired.
1924–1963 — If published with a proper copyright notice, and registered with the Copyright Office, it had to be renewed in the 28th year to remain protected. If it was renewed, it is not public domain; if it wasn't, it *is* public domain. Although some companies were very diligent about renewals, some weren't, and there are exceptions for almost every company. If it was not registered, it is public domain.

1963–1977 — If published with a proper copyright notice, it has automatic renewal and will not be public domain until at least 2058. If it did not have a proper copyright notice, then it is public domain. Although it is wholly dependent on the publisher, most people would be surprised to find that about 85% of publications from 1924–1963 were **not** renewed!

A PROPER COPYRIGHT NOTICE THROUGH 1977 MUST CONTAIN THREE ELEMENTS:

1. The word "copyright" or the © symbol;
2. The name of the copyright holder;
3. The year of publication.

These three elements don't have to be continuous, but they usually are. They must be in a conspicuous place, however. If they are not included or are not in a conspicuous place, the publication is automatically public domain.

1978–1988 — If published with a proper copyright notice, OR registered with the copyright office within five years, it is protected. If not, public domain.

1989–ON — No registration or copyright notice is required. If you create it, you own the copyright. If you spit on a napkin, that's your creation. If you doodle on the cuff of your shirt, it's yours.

WHAT IS AN ORPHAN BOOK?—This is a book that is under copyright but the rights-holder no longer exists—that is, the company is gone and no one holds its assets, or the rights-holder died without heirs. The books are technically not public domain, but there is literally no one to claim the rights.

Opinions differ on whether an orphan should be considered public domain; I believe that if it is a true orphan—that is, if you are confident that no one is around who owns those rights—then you should consider it public domain. Others may disagree, and it can be very hard to know for sure whether those rights still belong to someone, so tread lightly.

IT SAYS "ALL RIGHTS RESERVED"; IS THAT THE SAME THING?

This does NOT take the place of a proper copyright notice; it has no legal force and hasn't since the 1920s. In the early 1970s, Skywald Publishing failed to include a proper copyright notice in their B&W horror magazines, making those books public domain. They included the phrases "All Rights Reserved" and "Nothing can be reprinted in any form without the express permission of the publisher," but those phrases have no legal standing. They are meaningless without a proper copyright notice. In another book, they had the copyright symbol, the name of the publisher, but nowhere in or on the book was there any publication date—so it is public domain. Copyright can be unforgiving prior to 1978!

COPYRIGHT IS NOT TRADEMARK

A copyright is any creative work. A trademark is a symbol, word, or words legally registered or established by use as representing a company or product. Many readers are confused about these differences. Copyright has very few gray areas; while the copyright laws have changed and can be detailed, they are intended to be cut-and-dried. Trademarks can be a gray area and have often resulted in lawsuits and other disagreements because what seems obvious to one person is not so obvious to another. Trademarks are names, logos, designs, character appearance, and traits, or other items that differentiate one business from another. When someone produces a knock-off of a Nike shoe design or a Louis Vuitton purse, they are violating trademark laws. Recently the SHAZAM movie appeared, and while we all know that he is the Golden Age Captain Marvel, Marvel Comics owns the trademark to the name Captain Marvel. At Gwandanaland, we have published books containing public domain material of Archie, Betty and Veronica, and even the Mighty Crusaders, but Archie Comics owns the trademarks to those characters, so we could not feature certain elements on the cover or in our print marketing. I know a lot less about trademark than I do about copyright, but if you have any questions, I will help as much as I can.

It is not necessary to register a trademark for it to be legally valid, though it certainly helps in the case of conflicts. Even though we publish public domain materials, and you can use the pages and images in any manner you choose (since we all own them), the name Gwandanaland is our trademark, so *that* I do own myself. The SHIELD stories from the 1940s are public domain; whether the character name and design are trademarks of Archie Comics, I don't know. Trademarks can be lost through non-use, while copyrights are defined only by the law.

You shouldn't use this brief overview as the only reference. I'm just trying to show you that it's not too complex to navigate and that it is possible to learn what is public domain and what is not. I am not an expert; I know a little bit more than the guy on the street, but only because the guy on the street probably couldn't care less.

— Lance Jones —

PHOTOGRAPHER PAUL PATTON NEEDED AN EDGE...
...A WAY TO BE THE FIRST ONE AT THE SCENE OF A CRIME...
CLICK
...A WAY TO STAY A STEP AHEAD OF HIS BEAUTIFUL AND GUTSY PARTNER:
RUTH RANSOM
WHAM!
...A WAY TO SATISFY HIS THIRST FOR BOTH ACTION AND JUSTICE...
...AND MAYBE SELL A FEW NEWSPAPERS IN THE PROCESS.
EXTRA
THE FOX

by Chris Watts

The Impact of the Legend of the Shield

by Joe Sewell

In July of 1991 DC Comics brought out a new publishing line, an entirely different, separate, distinct universe from the one they had brought together after Crisis on Infinite Earths. This line featured a new set of heroes. I can't say I was familiar with them, and this was long before the days of Google. Still, I had heard of one of the characters: The Shield. I didn't know back then that he had started out as a hero the year before Captain America was introduced, and I certainly didn't know that Cap's iconic discus shield was due, in part, to this earlier hero. I did know one thing, though: I loved the whole line, and Legend of the Shield stuck with me, even after the line was canceled in December of 1992. I'm not sure whether it was an issue with my local comic shop or the death of my father or what—1993 was a significant year for me—but I completely missed the attempted rebirth, but overall total mishandling, of the line with the Crucible event.

The series had a little bit of everything. A soldier is blackmailed by his own military father into testing a suit of armor based on one that had been left behind. The soldier must deal with doing good, obeying orders, and dealing with some serious dirt. He goes AWOL, stealing the "rig," and deals with even more dirt, including a mysterious cyborg who seems to have a connection to the project. Bubbling under the surface is the mystery of what happened to the original Shield. It all comes to a head, things get resolved, but the soldier, Joe Higgins, is forced to leave his rig behind, giving it to the "runner-up" in the contest for the honor of wearing the suit. The new guy, Stephen Barnes (misnamed Michael Barnes in one place), might not have what it takes. He seems to meet his end, and the two veteran Shields must complete the mission.

And then everything goes "boom." Higgins, along with most of the other Impact heroes, disappear in what appears to be a teleportation accident. End of the line … at least until Crucible appears. That title jars the reader into some new territory, with a few survivors of the end of the Impact line, and some newcomers, successors, and so forth. One surprise is the American Shield, who turns out to be a severely injured but otherwise living Barnes. The focus of most of the miniseries is on the Comet, a hero who discovers he's really an alien duplicating the body of a kidnapped Earthman, and the slide into insanity. Not what I call a glowing treatment of the hero, but there you have it.

The comic book buyers weren't going to have that, though. While there are a few bits of surviving work for what would've become the new Impact line, everything ended there. The final page of Crucible appears to be a rushed finale that was more of a washing of hands than a serious farewell. It also left way too many questions unanswered.

Back in those pre-Internet days, we had CompuServe and America Online (AOL). They had forums for discussion. I was quite active in the Comics forum, performing one of my favorite tasks: cleaning up messes others left behind. Some called me a "continuity janitor." There was no shortage of need for such things after Crisis, and ever since then. I lost interest in that, and eventually in comics altogether. I sold off my collection in the process of moving, discovered that I just didn't have the time or the money to keep it up, and a total lack of interest after Flashpoint, New 52, and Brand New Day.

Eventually, to make an already long story a little bit shorter, I ran into Rik Offenberger and his connections with The Shield. His Mighty Crusaders site and his book, The MLJ Companion, gave me not only the background I had missed but a renewed interest in my favorite characters. I managed to get replacement copies of Legend of the Shield as well as Crucible and became inspired. Rik's site has unfinished art for the first issue of American Shield, but nothing much was said about the first two Shields in the Impact line.

I wasn't going to stand for that! What happened? Why did that handshake deal at the end of Crucible not appear in American Shield? Besides, I wasn't too happy with a few things in those two titles. So, I changed it.

I wrote the first chapter of a fanfic continuation of the story, *The Impact of the Shields*. My plan was to bring back, or at least demonstrate what happened to, the original Shields, carefully working around the bits in Crucible I didn't like and incorporate a few other things I wanted to. I have a long-term plan that, honestly, I don't want to spoil in this fanzine article. I've gotten to issue 10 of the series, and really owe my fans (both of them) issue 11. Things should really start to get interesting in an issue or two, with several reveals, a few nods to what went before, and some other goodies.

One creation that came out of this was a whole new character. Inspired by a bit of the classic Canadian Shield (reworked classic Shield stories with the main character sporting the Canadian Union Jack, their flag at the time), Batman, Inc., and my work life, as well as one of the secrets I haven't revealed yet, I came up with a new character that could be hero or villain. (Okay, by now it looks like he's not doing this 100% voluntarily.) Thanks to my first commissioned artwork, done digitally and delivered online by Jay Piscopo, The Shield went international. A Middle Eastern fellow, Operative: Desert Shield, showed up. I didn't want to make him wholly "evil Muslim tyrant," but the star and crescent motif is prevalent in that area. Taking inspiration from some of the flags of Middle Eastern countries, I gave Jay a rough sketch of the chest emblem, and what he produced was fantastic! (The full art

So what did you get for your 2¢ stamp?

You got a beautiful pinback button.

Shield G-Man Club Badge

1941–1943

1st version

blue rim, celluloid pinback button

1¾ inches in diameter

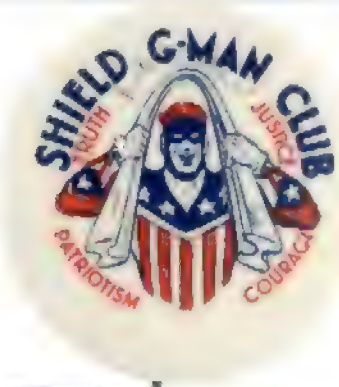
Shield G-Man Club Badge

1941–1943

2nd version

no rim, celluloid pinback button

1½ inches in diameter



Shield G-Man Club Badge

1943–1948

3rd version

die-cut shield-shaped Badge

Manufactured by Whitehead and Hoag

This pin is the most common, due to recent warehouse find

1″ tall

Shield G-Man Club Badge

1943–1948

4th version

no rim, celluloid pinback button

1¼ inches in diameter

includes the other Impact Shields surrounding him. Jay made sure the threat, or lack thereof, was ambiguous.)

You can go to Rik's site, mightycrusaders.net, and look in the forums for my fanfic, or pull the pieces together from one or two Facebook groups. Desert Shield has taken on a life of his own, though. Rik has his own series of covers about his own variant of the hero, Agent Shield, and no fewer than 3 other artists have drawn Desert Shield since then. He's even a part of Rik's "G-Man Universe" Who's Who volume. At one point it even inspired an Israeli version, Magen, alongside Judah "The Hammer" Maccabee. Magen quietly disappeared from the G-Man universe, but he did pop up in Impact of the Shields. (Plans? Did somebody mention plans?)

I'd probably be fired if I were doing this for pay (or I changed my name to Grant Morrison) because life and fatigue has produced speed bumps with my writing. I'm surprised these words are flowing as easily out of my fingertips as they are. Still, it's fun! This has taken me down a road I never dreamed I'd go. Yeah, I've written fanfic before, as well as some other things along the way, and I've got more I want to write. To discover how crazy popular this has become, though, still makes my jaw drop.

— Joe Sewell —

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THE SHIELD G-MAN CLUB

https://www.facebook.com/groups/shieldgmanclub

RED CIRCLE INVESTIGATIONS

How a 30 years obsession spawned the first ever Mighty Crusaders Fan Film

by Jason Contini

I can still remember, vividly, seeing the first issues of The Legend of the Shield and The Fly sitting on the rack at the comic shop. My Dad had told me The Mighty Crusaders were returning to comics from a new company called Impact Comics and after he filled me in on who these heroes were, I couldn't wait. Those two books are two of the most influential comic books for me. They were the first comics I collected on a regular basis and I think it's safe to say that I became obsessed.

Over the years since, I have scoured and collected nearly every issue of every incarnation of these characters from the Mighty Comics Era to the most recent issues from Dark Circle Comics. Variant covers, brief appearances, even just appearances where The Archie gang dressed up as The Crusaders...I had to have them all. These books got me into comics. The Impact line specifically was instrumental in me developing my artistic abilities (which it could be argued still needs much development).

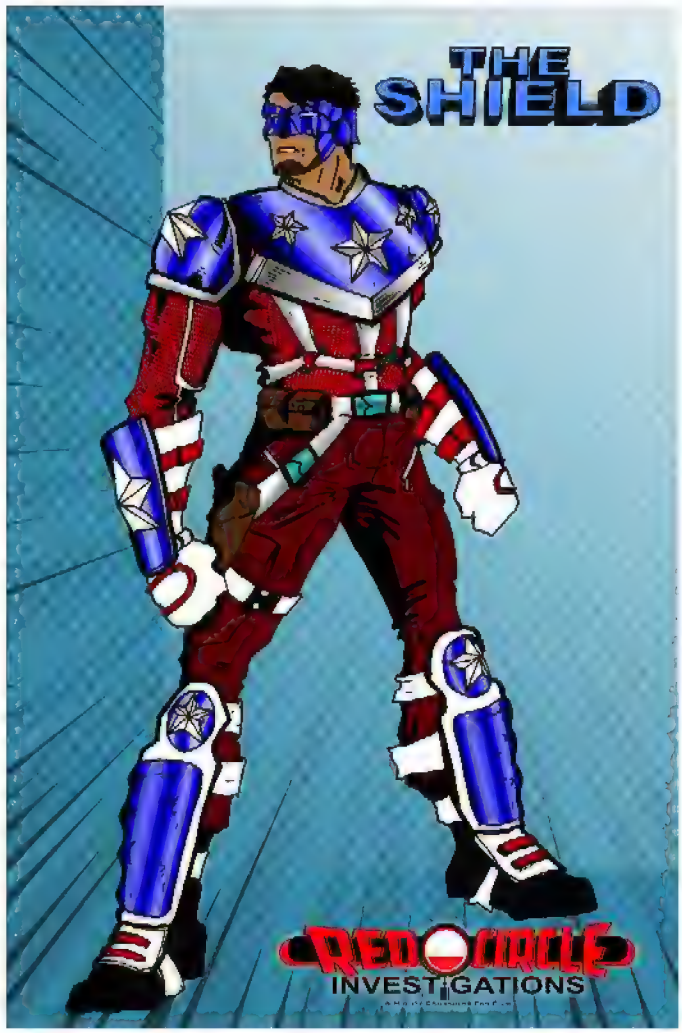
As I turned my attention to the world of theatre and film, I never let go of those heroes. I always wanted to one day draw them in a comic book or add my name to the rich history of these characters. I suppose, on some level, the idea of possibly working on a Crusaders comic helped influence my film making a few years ago. The first feature film I wrote and produced myself and was able to get a theatrical and DVD release for, FOUR COLOR EULOGY, was a film about a young aspiring comic book writer trying to revive the lost heroes of his boyhood idol.

And as I think about it now, that wasn't very far from the truth. I have, over the years, submitted two revival pitches to Archie Comics dealing with these characters; one with my brother Nathan, and one with my writing partner Nicholas J. Hearne. I've even begun developing an ongoing fan fiction universe with Nathan entitled RED IMPACT 2139, a futuristic take on The Mighty Crusaders in the vein and style of the classic Marvel 2099 line of the 1990's (keep your eyes out on social media for that sometime in 2020).

And even now, I'm currently developing another pitch to submit to Archie/Dark Circle. A pitch that would not only tie-in to every iteration that has come before, and put a cap on all that has been, but also give a fresh start for the Mighty Crusaders stable of heroes that would update their origins, stories and designs.

But in doing so I've also wondered what is it that a successful relaunch of these characters would need? What aspects of my concept would I say would be the most crucial? And in thinking about it, what I realized is that the most important issues to focus on would be the same for any relaunch, done by anyone.

One - Update, don't modernize. Basically, what I mean by this, is the classic origins for these characters are the ones that work. They just need to be reworked to fit into the 21st Century. They don't have to be changed radically. They don't need to be darkened or completely reworked from scratch. If you look at most superheroes from Marvel or DC, the origins are the same. They may have changed details, updated aspects of certain moments, but they're still the same. You can change whether Pa Kent is still alive when Clark Kent becomes Superman or if he died before he left Smallville. You can alter whether Clark became Superboy first or waited till he was an adult to don the suit. You can make minor changes to update, but at the end of the day, Superman is still the last survivor of Krypton who crashes in Kansas and was taken in by the Kents. Don't change it, because that's what works. Same goes for The Mighty Crusaders heroes.



And that goes double for the costume designs. These characters resonate visually for a reason. If it ain't broke...

Two - Make a real world event out of it! Give readers and future fans a reason to get excited. Build the hype. The same way the Justice League or The Avengers would get hyped for their next big event story.

Three - Don't over-saturate. There are so many superhero comics on the shelves it's hard to vie for attention. **But**, what if readers could get an entire shared universe in only two or three titles. Crossovers could be held to Annuals. Buying only three books a month and getting an entire universe is a hell of a lot more enticing than having to pick and choose a few titles out of 50 or more and not get the whole story. (But maybe that's just me)

Four - Let the story play out. The Mighty Crusaders are not going to find an audience if the stories are not allowed to build. Give them time to connect with readers so that readers can build an attachment to them. No comic series, at least in this day and age, is a mega hit over night off of only 4 issues.

And Five - (and this one really pertains mostly to my pitch) Take a lead from Marvel's Ultimate line and make it, for lack of a better term, ultimate. Similarly, IDW has been having great success with their Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle line, which has felt like an Ultimate TMNT. A book that is limited to

one or two ongoings at any given time and maybe a mini series here or there. And the stories they tell draw from every version of the Turtles that has ever been: Movies, comics, cartoons, etc. It gives something for every Turtles fan from every era. And it has been wonderful.

That's the focus of *my* pitch anyway. Who knows if I'll ever realize my dream of writing or drawing a Mighty Crusaders comic. That's something that will just have to be left up to the universe to decide. However, a few months ago, I found a new way to create a story for these characters, share it with all the other like minded Crusaders fans out there, and at the same time maybe even help create a few new fans along the way: create the first ever Mighty Crusaders Fan Film!

The Birth Of The Red Circle Investigations: A Mighty Crusaders Fan Film

Avengers Endgame came to its final breathtaking moments and closed out an unprecedented 11 year experience in late April of 2019. After the final frame of credits rolled, my friends and I left the theatre awestruck and many of us reconvened at a local diner for some late night food and discussion on the film. Over the years, we have all worked together on various film and comic projects and numerous hours of podcasts. A few years ago Nicholas Hearne, Gayle Gallagher, Robert Clark, Gabe Sheets, Taylor Pietz, John Contini and I all worked on or appeared in Wyatt Weed's Batman fan film, THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS: AN EPIC FAN FILM. So, naturally, after having just seen the biggest of all superhero/comic book movies, the talk of fan films came up while at the diner. Would we ever make the other installments to the DARK KNIGHT fan film series? Would any of us ever want to attempt to pull off the fan film equivalent of Avengers Endgame? And what, if

any, fan films would each of us one day like to produce or direct? I answered that last question by saying that if I were ever to do a fan film I would love to try to do one on The Shield, The Jaguar, The Fly or any of the Mighty Crusaders.

Over the week that followed I scoured the internet, trying to find any fan film based on any of The MLJ/Red Circle/Impact heroes. These have been my favorite comic book characters since I was young and after all our talk a few nights before, I really wanted to watch a fan film featuring these heroes. Especially since, in the near future anyway, the likelihood of seeing The Mighty Crusaders come to life in any kind of resemblance to the MCU was pretty slim. I found none. Notta. Zilch. It was that moment that I decided....If I can't find one to watch, then I'll make one.

That is how the RED CIRCLE INVESTIGATIONS: A MIGHTY CRUSADERS FAN FILM was born!

The first step was to sit down and write a treatment for a script that I felt would be financially and physically possible for a young production company to shoot and shoot well. Much like we did on FOUR COLOR EULOGY, I took the treatment to one of my writing partners: my father, John Contini. Together we came up with a story that would not only showcase two or three of these wonderful characters but would also fit within our economic limitations and even use them to our advantage. From there fellow producers Nicholas J. Hearne and Nathan Contini came on board.

"This is a very unique project because we're dealing with characters that have never been seen anywhere else, other than in the comic book form," says Writer/Producer John Contini, and that unique-ness is what has drawn this production team together for this film. He adds "And we're also dealing with characters that have evolved over their history from the 1930's all the way up until now. Many different variations. So we had a lot to draw on."

Just how do you draw from such varied depictions of these characters over such a long period, do the characters and the hardcore fans of these characters justice, while keeping this film completely accessible to all the new fans we hope to create? That became the hardest challenge we have faced. Our decision was to look through all 80 years worth of comics featuring these characters and utilize the best bits or our personal favorite aspects of the history and mix them together into one blended story. And then we fill the film with easter eggs. "For die hard fans, there are so many easter eggs and nods to all of the iterations of these characters that they will literally giggle like little school girls while they're watching it" says producer Hearne.

We started by utilizing one of the primary, and depending on how you look at it, unfortunate aspects of the printing history of these characters: these characters always have a strong short run and then vanish from comic shelves for a number of years only to triumphantly return in a new era with a few new versions. That became our starting point. In our story, The Mighty Crusaders have been missing for nearly 30 years, and an amnesiac investigator, by the name of Walter Whitney, finds himself entangled in a mystery that may just involve The Crusaders mighty return. As three costumed heroes appear, Walter must discover if these are the original Crusaders who have returned or new people taking up the mantles? And why now, after all these years?

But in order to tell that story, our production team had to develop this world. We had to develop backstories for these characters that matched their comic book origins. And, knowing that we would

only be able to afford a 20 to 30 minute short film, we decided that rather than pare the story down, we would break it into 5 or 6 chapters.

The first draft of Chapter One was written by myself and John while Nicholas and Nathan began to develop character back stories and rough outlines for the future chapters to what we started referring to as an "online fan film mini-series movie". "We're actually creating a brand new universe based off of different versions of all these characters" says Hearne. We don't know at this time if fans will like this first chapter or if we'll be able to get the subsequent chapters made. But, in case we are able to, we knew we needed to have it all preplanned and outlined before ever shooting a frame of footage for chapter one.

And all of that planning would need to be done fast because much of that would inform Nathan, a producer as well as the production's lead designer, what direction to go in with the costume designs. "As a designer I wanted to think of the most extravagantly, unique, crazy costumes that would look cool on film" says Nathan. "But how would these cost financially? How would it be done practically?"

As the director of the project, I told him to look at the way the costumes have been done in the MCU as well as on television with DC's Arrowverse. Use that as the starting guide. And as his designs started coming in for the characters, they were so perfect, and so cool, that I started to go a little crazy adding characters to the film. The script is currently on it's fifth draft and all I will say here is that chapter one will showcase or feature a whole lot more than just three Mighty Crusaders!

But isn't that what we all would want from a Mighty Crusaders fan film anyway? As many superheroes on screen together as possible? Even if it is just our computer screens and not the big screen... yet.

This project has become such a labor of love. From the crowdfunding campaign we used to assist us in getting a little extra gear and materials for building the costumes (namely The Shield's) to finding talented cast and crew who will donate their time for such a project (can't make any money on fan film) our hope here is that this film will introduce new audiences to these characters and maybe create new fans for future generations. But at its core, it is a film that is made for all of us hardcore Mighty Crusaders fans. A film that we can show to people and share with friends. We don't have a major feature film representing our favorite heroes on a DVD somewhere that we can loan to someone to show how cool these characters are. But with a fan film, we can.

And, who knows, maybe I won't ever get to tell my Mighty Crusaders story in comics. Maybe the first ever Crusaders fan film is my way to help fill the world with more Mighty Crusaders. I don't know. What I do know, is that our production team, Archlight Studios, will do everything we can to show the world why The Mighty Crusaders are the best and deserve the spotlight just as much as those guys from the big two. And if a young guy who has spent most of his forty years on this Earth being obsessed with these characters can add his name to their rich history in some small way at the same time... I can live with that.

For more on the RED CIRCLE INVESTIGATIONS: A MIGHTY CRUSADERS FAN FILM including updates and character concept designs, check out the Archlight Entertainment website at www.ArchlightEntertainment.com. Look for the film to debut on Youtube sometime in 2020.

Thank You Crusaders!!!
COURT HOUSE
CRUSADERS THROUGH THE YEARS
FLY & JAGUAR art by
John Contini
COMET & WEB art by
Nathan Contini
THE SHIELDS art by
Jason Contini

Rang-A-Tang: The Dog With Human Sidekicks

by Kevin Noel Olson

First published as a feature in Blue Ribbon Comics #1, November 1, 1939, the German Shepherd Rang-a-Tang, The Wonder Dog, ran away from his abusive circus trainer. One night in a dark alley, he sees Detective Hy Speed attacked by thugs with the intention of killing him. Rang-a-Tang intervenes, saving the Detective's life. Hy takes the dog on, and the two quickly create an inseparable bond.

Created by writer Norman Danberg and artist Edwin Ashe, Rang-a-Tang is truly the hero of the stories, which run throughout the 22-issues of Blue Ribbon Comics. Detective Speed directs the canine companion, yet rarely takes the role as the lead character. Rang-a-Tang's training for the circus gives him abilities that test the limits of an average dog. He can leap into second story windows, can hear the ticking of bombs, anticipate the thoughts of humans, and a slew of incredible abilities while remaining within the limits of his species.

In issue #6, Richy, the Amazing Boy appears to turn the pair into a trio.

Richy is sometimes a film actor with training as a scout. Called in earlier films The Amazing Boy, this character, too, is often saved by Rang-a-Tang's remarkable sensitivity to danger and natural protective instincts.

Like Detective Speed, The Amazing Boy ends up being a sidekick to this extremely capable canine. Hy and Richy rarely attempt to dissuade the shepherd, rather trusting his instincts while wondering at the purpose of his actions at times. Rang-a-Tang saved babies from burning buildings, used his sensitive hearing to detect ticking bombs, and even fended off humans from approaching too close to the anticipated blast area. In one instance, he bodily drug Richy away from Detective Speed's roadster just before a bomb exploded and destroyed the vehicle.

Rang-a-Tang has the distinction of being the first police dog featured in comics. His influence on similar characters to come is pronounced. If he is not directly an inspiration for the Lassie television show to follow, Benji, Scooby Doo, and a host of other dog-eared heroes to come, the German shepherd is a clear influence. Lassie, from an 1859 short story from writer Elizabeth Gaskell, definitely preceded Rang-a-Tang, yet the growth of the 1950s television show could easily have taken some earmarks out of the comic stories. Old Shep, another dog companion created by Red Foley for the eponymous 1933 song, perhaps influenced the creator of Rang-a-Tang. It's even fair to say that Shep was a German shepherd like Rang. It's noteworthy to repeat that Rang-a-Tang had human sidekicks, an unusual feature for canines in the comic books of 1939. Of course, in 1939, comic books themselves remained in their infancy.

Sketch Cards

by Korey Watkins

Then there was the Membership ID Card. Not all of them were actually signed by Joe Higgins—note the different signatures. Possibly signed for Joe by Betty or Dusty?

THE SHIELD G-MAN CLUB
This is to certify that
is a member in good standing of the
Shield G-Man Club
and is entitled to all privileges thereof.
JOE HIGGINS, (THE SHIELD)
PEP COMICS
SHIELD G-MAN CLUB

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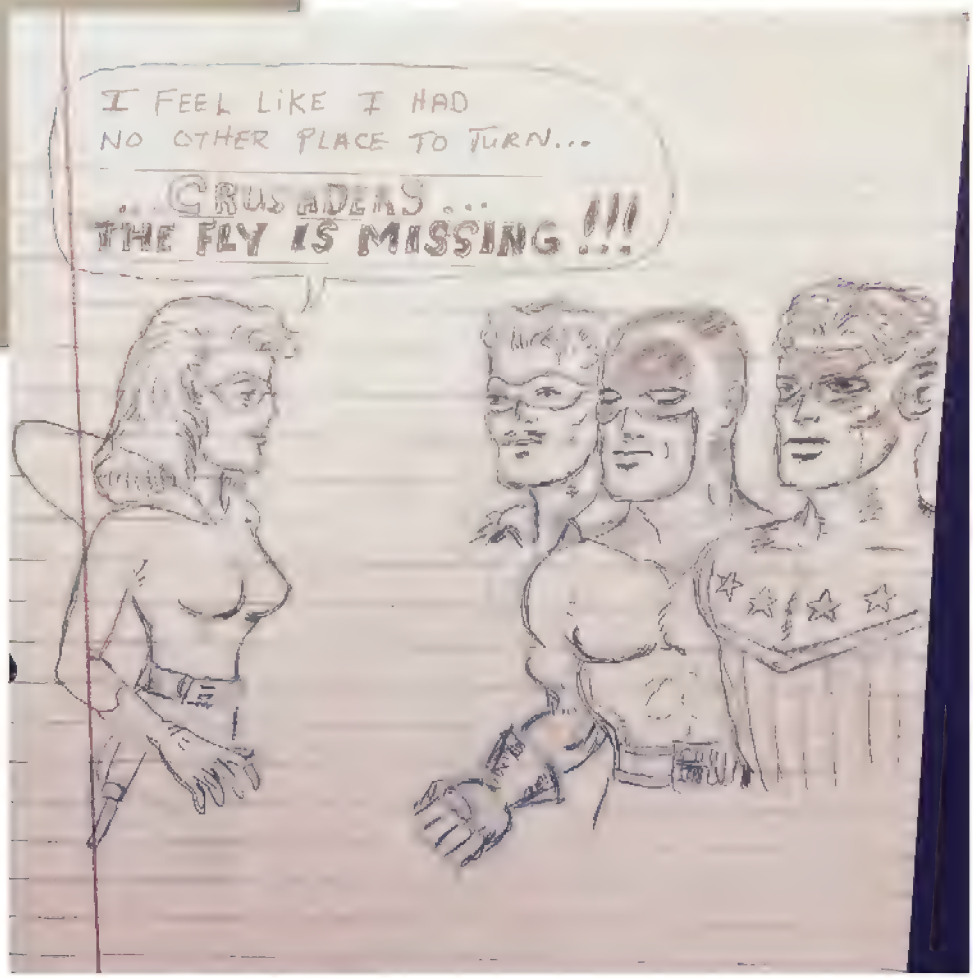
Fly Girl Sketches

by Daniel St. John



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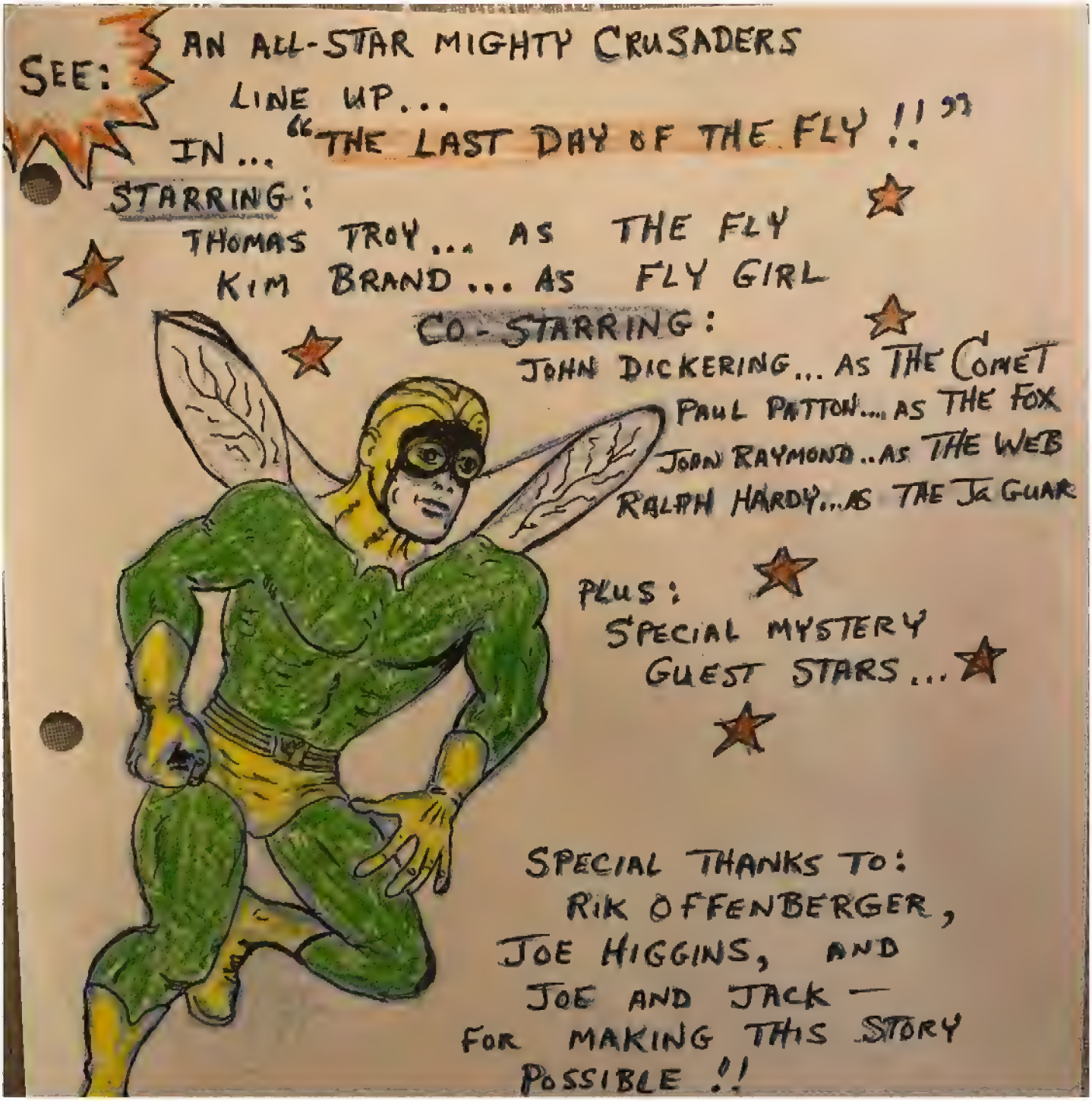

SEE: AN ALL-STAR MIGHTY CRUSADERS LINE UP...
IN... "THE LAST DAY OF THE FLY!!"
STARRING:
THOMAS TROY... AS THE FLY
KIM BRAND... AS FLY GIRL
CO-STARRING:
JOHN DICKERING... AS THE COMET
PAUL PATTON... AS THE FOX
JOHN RAYMOND.. AS THE WEB
RALPH HARDY... AS THE JAGUAR
PLUS:
SPECIAL MYSTERY GUEST STARS...
SPECIAL THANKS TO:
RIK OFFENBERGER,
JOE HIGGINS, AND
JOE AND JACK —
FOR MAKING THIS STORY POSSIBLE!!

"THE LAST DAY OF THE FLY!!"

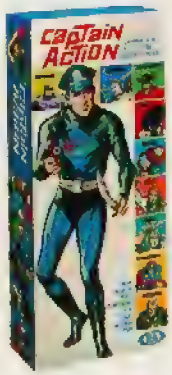
ZAP!

JUST CHANGE THE OUTFIT TO CHANGE THE HERO

CAPTAIN ACTION

...can become any one of nine favorite comic strip super heroes!

3400-9 CAPTAIN ACTION FIGURE
Fully jointed, 12" high Captain Action Figure comes complete with his own unique uniform and accessories, including: lightning sword and special scabbard, gun, gun belt, removable boots and hat.
Pack per doz: 1 Weight: 10 lbs



Full-color box depicts Captain Action Figure in his nine super hero outfits

CAPTAIN ACTION 2019 TM & © CAE LLC
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Who's Who THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE G-MAN UNIVERSE

facebook.com/groups/shieldgmanclub

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It all came to an end when Archie Andrews took over the club and made it in his own image. Pep Comics #66 carried the message that the club would be known as the Archie Club. Members were requested to send in their membership cards, in exchange for which they were to receive a new Archie Club button free of charge. New members could join for 10¢.

FAREWELL!!!

Greetings Shield G-Man Members! Dusty and I have bad and good news for you. The bad news is that we have been assigned to a very heavy schedule by the F.B.I. and as a result we won't be able to be with you club members anymore. Dusty is almost heartbroken at having to leave all you boys and girls we have come to know and love so much — and me, well I don't feel so good myself. But orders are orders and as members of the Shield G-Man Club you yourselves know that when the call to duty arrives, no matter how great the personal hardship, you have got to make a sacrifice. But every cloud has a silver lining and this one is lined with gold. Archie Andrews that irrepressible, happy-go-lucky, laugh-getting kid who has made himself famous from the Atlantic to the Pacific, in fact in every corner of the world, is stepping in. He is going to take over the Shield G-Man Club and call it the Archie Club. I'll let Archie himself explain it. So once again — so long and our very very best. We may leave you, but we will never forget you. Take it away Archie.

HELLO GANG!

Archie Andrews broadcasting. First, I want to thank Joe Higgins and Dusty for giving me the chance of a lifetime. I have been a member of the Shield G-Man Club myself for years, but I never dreamed that I would see the day when I would be running it. Frankly, I am scared stiff. Joe and Dusty, have got one of the biggest and finest clubs in the world and to think of taking over so many hundreds of thousands of members—whew, well I've just got stage fright. But the show must go on, so I'll just keep my teeth from chattering long enough to give you some information about our new club. All you Shield G-Man members are automatically members of my new Archie Club. All you have to do is turn in your Shield G-Man identification card, and we will mail you in return, absolutely free of charge, an Archie Club button. For those who have not yet gotten around to joining, all you have to do is fill in, cut out the coupon on this page and send it along to us. I will mail you an Archie button and from that time on you are entitled to all the privileges of our new club. That means you are eligible for any prizes, contests, gifts, premiums, pen pals clubs, etc. that we might run on this page. It is all yours, just for the asking. All you have to do is send along 10¢ to cover the cost of mailing your button. Well, so long for now. Jughead, Betty, Veronica and myself will be waiting to hear from you.

Archie Andrews

And Archie had his own collectors' pin.

Then in 2018, the club would rise again…

HEY! FELLERS!!
HERE'S WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR A LONG TIME!
THE SHIELD G-MAN CLUB
SHIELD G-MAN CLUB
TRUTH
JUSTICE
PATRIOTISM
COURAGE
All members of the SHIELD G-MAN CLUB will receive a beautiful Red, White and Blue membership badge, plus an identification card personally signed by me...
Joe Higgins, absolutely
FREE!*
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.....
To become a member of the SHIELD G-MAN CLUB, all you have to do is tear off this entire page of PEP COMICS, write your name and address on the coupon below, and mail it to me, enclosing a two-cent stamp to cover the cost of mailing ... "That's all there is, that ain't no more requirements for membership!"
And be sure you keep turning to this page in every issue of PEP COMICS, because from now on this it the "Shield G-Man Club" page. That Means it is your page. Here, I will discuss the purpose of the SHIELD G-MAN CLUB and whatever we are going to do depends on exactly what you want me to do. SO, as soon as you get your identification card, if you have any ideas for organizing groups in your own town, or if you have ever had any experience working with the law, send me a line and let me know. Your letter will be discussed right on this page.
Just print clearly on the coupon below, your name, address, age and tear out this entire page of PEP COMICS and Send it to me with a two-cent stamp only, to cover the exact cost of mailing.
* Offer valid while supplies last!
Joe Higgins
THE SHIELD G-MAN CLUB
12973 Saddleback Pl.
Chino, CA 91710
DEAR JOE:
PLEASE ENROLL ME AS A MEMBER OF THE SHIELD G-MAN CLUB. I AM ENCLOSING THIS ENTIRE PAGE OF PEP COMICS TOGETHER WITH A 2¢ STAMP TO HANDLE THE COST OF MAILING ME BADGE AND IDENTIFICATION CARD.
NAME_____
ADDRESS_____
STREET CITY STATE
AGE_____

May 1941. Volume 1, Number 15. PEP COMICS is published monthly by M. L. J. Magazines, Inc., 420 DeSoto Avenue, St. Luis, Mo. Editorial offices: 160 W. Broadway, New York City, N. Y. Entered as second call matter at the Post Office. St. Luis, Mo. Red. U. S. Patent Office. Entire contents copyrighted 1941 by M. L. J. Magazines, Inc. Yearly subscription $1.20 in the U. S. A. Single copies 10 cents. No actual person named or delineated in this fiction magazine. Printed in the U. S. A.
For advertising rated write Double Action Comic Group. 60 Hudson Street, New York City.

A new membership card was issued…

and updated in 2019…

Another updated version was given away in 2019 at the "80 Years of Archie Superheroes" Panel at the San Diego ComicCon International…

and it is being updated again in 2020 as the 80th Anniversary Editions (1-sided or 2-sided):

THE SHIELD G-MAN CLUB
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and is entitled to all privileges thereof.
JOE HIGGINS (THE SHIELD)
PEP COMICS
80th ANNIVERSARY EDITION
THE SHIELD G-MAN CLUB

Shield G-Man Club Badge
2018
5th Version
blue rim, mylar film pinback button; the overall construction comprises metal and heavy-duty polymer backing
1¼ inches in diameter
Limited to 200

5th Edition 2018 1¼ inches

Shield G-Man Club Badge
2019
6th Version
red circle rim, mylar film pinback button; the overall construction comprises metal and heavy-duty polymer backing
1½ inches in diameter
Limited to 200

6th Edition 2019 1½ inches

Shield G-Man Club Badge
2019 – San Diego ComicCon Edition
7th Version
blue circle rim, mylar film pinback button; the overall construction comprises metal and heavy-duty polymer backing
1¼ inches in diameter
Limited to 300
Given away at the "80 Years of Archie Superheroes" panel at the San Diego ComicCon International, & Facebook Shield, G-Man Club.

7th Edition 2019 1¼ inches

Shield G-Man Club Badge
2019 – Coolectric Creations Badge
8th Version
This beautiful enameled cloisonné pin was designed by Phil Palumbo, based on the 3rd Version from 1943. The back has double rubber clutch back.
1¼ x 2 inches
Limited to 100 numbered
Given to panelists at the "80 Years of Archie Superheroes" panel at the San Diego ComicCon International, & Facebook's Shield, G-Man Club.

8th Edition 2019 1¼ x 2 inches

Shield G-Man Club Badge
2020
9th Version – 80th Anniversary Edition
black rim, mylar film pinback button; the overall construction comprises metal and heavy-duty polymer backing
1½ inches in diameter
Limited to 100

9th Edition 1¼ inches

Shield G-Man Club Badge
2020
10th Version – 80th Anniversary Edition
blue circle rim, mylar film pinback button; the overall construction comprises metal and heavy-duty polymer backing
1¼ inches in diameter
Limited to 100

10th Edition 1¼ inches

The 2019 **Shield, G-Man Club Poster** can be downloaded from MightyCrusaders.net.

"Who's Who, The Official Handbook of the G-Man Universe Vol. 1" can be downloaded or purchased as print on demand at IndyPlanet.com.